

Appln. No.: 10/718,935

Reply to Office action of March 15, 2006

**LISTING OF CLAIMS:**

1(Currently Amended). A method of manufacturing a metal gasket assembly, comprising:

providing a plate having opposite sides with an opening therethrough, said sides defining a thickness corresponding to a compressed thickness of said gasket assembly;

forming an annular grommet having a generally U-shaped cross-section defining a pair of axially spaced legs having outer axially opposite sealing surfaces spaced a predetermined distance apart when in an undeformed state corresponding to an initial thickness of the grommet which is greater than [[the]] said thickness of the plate;

installing the grommet in the opening of the plate; and

wherein the grommet is fabricated of a heat-treatable ferrous-based metal material and is formed to the annular, U-shaped cross-sectional configuration when the grommet material is in a relatively soft, plastically deformable pre-heated condition, and where after forming, the grommet is subjected to a heat treatment to impart elasticity and strength properties to the grommet enabling the legs of the grommet to be compressed elastically under an axial compression load to a reduced thickness corresponding substantially to the thickness of the plate and to return to the initial thickness upon removal of the compressive load.

2(Currently Amended). The method of claim [[10]] 1 wherein the heat treatment step has an austemper heat treat cycle.

3(Currently Amended). The method of claim [[10]] 1 wherein the pair of legs are formed such that one of the legs is formed longer than the other leg.

4(Currently Amended). The method of claim [[10]] 1 further comprising applying a coating to the grommet after the heat treatment step.

5(New). The method of claim 1 further including defining an annular gap between said grommet and said plate during the installation step.

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6(New). The method of claim 1 further including forming said legs having free ends, said free ends being spaced radially inwardly from said opening after said installation step.

7(New). The method of claim 1 further including defining a space between said legs said space being free from any compression limiting materials such that said legs are free to elastically deform under the compression load.

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